

INSANE HOSPITAL.

REPORT
OF
THE JOINT COMMITTEE

Appointed to visit the Hospital for the Insane.

To the General Assembly of the State of Illinois:

The undersigned, a joint select committee appointed by the senate and house of representatives to examine the Illinois state hospital for the insane, would respectfully

REPORT:

That, accompanied by his excellency the governor, they visited said institution on the 28th day of January ultimo, and proceeded to the discharge of the duty assigned them. They were unable, from the short space of time allowed them, to institute a very rigid or thorough examination into the manner of conducting the affairs of the hospital in every particular. Nor was this deemed necessary, from the fact that very full reports of the condition and prospects of the institution have already been submitted to this assembly at its present session, by the Hon. Ninian W. Edwards, on the part of the commissioners appointed by the last legislature, as also by the trustees and superintendent. Your committee can, therefore, do little else than express a general concurrence with the views and sentiments embraced in the reports alluded to, with an occasional modification.

They acquiesced in the opinion expressed by all who have visited the asylum, as to its perfection of plan, superior mechanical execution, symmetrical architecture, elegance of finish and admirable adaptation to the purpose for which it was erected. Those charged with carrying into effect this noble charity of our state, have wisely availed themselves of all the valuable improvements suggested by experience, both with regard to architectural design and internal arrangement. The gratifying result is, that they have produced a work which, when entirely completed, will be the admiration of all who visit it, and of which the state may well be proud. That a building of such vast proportions should have been erected in so substantial and finished in so superior a manner, for the sum of *eighty-four thousand dollars*,

is proof conclusive that no wasteful extravagance has been indulged in, but that a proper economy has been observed in its construction.

The committee most cordially indorse the commendatory notice by the superintendent, of Mr. M. C. Goltra, the architect, and Messrs. Melick & Mount, the plasterers. Indeed, the plastering done under the special supervision of Mr. Abraham Melick, deserves particular notice, as being executed in the very highest style of the art.

The arrangements for supplying the different apartments of the building with warmed air, and with an abundant supply of warm and cold water, have been very clearly and minutely described by the superintendent in his report. Your committee will only add, that the perfection of those arrangements challenged their highest admiration. Through their means, pure air of a delightful temperature is constantly circulating through all the different wards, and so perfect is the ventilation that the whole volume of atmosphere in each apartment is renewed every fifteen minutes. A small steam engine, which serves other important uses, also forces a sufficiency of fresh, wholesome water into the fifth story of the building, whence it is conducted by pipes to the different rooms, to be used as required by the wants of the inmates.

As an evidence of the thorough and admirable system which prevails in the management of the institution, the committee remarked that a register is kept in which is each day recorded the external and internal temperature, the number of gallons of water discharged into the reservoirs, the number of cubic feet of warmed air introduced into the building, the amount of fuel consumed, &c. From this table it appears that the cost of warming and ventilation amounts to but one and a half cents per day for each patient. Thus, while a great saving in cost is effected by means of a scientific arrangement, the object is more perfectly accomplished, and all danger from fire is avoided.

With regard to the sanatory regulations adopted by the medical officers of the institution, the committee will state as a conclusion from their observations, that they believe them to be such as are sanctioned by experience in other hospitals. Due regard seems to be paid to the cleanliness and comfort of the patients; and the professional attainments of the gentlemen in charge afford ample guaranty that the unfortunate inmates are properly treated, with a view to their restoration to reason, where recovery is possible. This opinion is confirmed by an examination of the tabular report of cures effected since the institution has been opened for the reception of patients. Notwithstanding the disadvantages which must naturally have resulted from an unfinished state of the building, inexperienced attendants, and impossibility, from want of room, for proper classification, it will be found by reference to the report of the trustees, that the per centage of cures has not only been greater, but those cures have been actually affected at less cost in the Illinois hospital for the insane, than in an average of the like institutions in ten other states, including in the enumeration all the great states of the Union. The result, under all the circumstances, is a matter of just pride, and the simple recital of the fact is the most fitting tribute to the ability and efficiency of the su-

perintendent and his assistants. The good opinion they have won, it is hoped, by an unremitting assiduity in the discharge of their duties, they will continue to deserve.

Your committee are fully impressed with the justness of the suggestions of the superintendent with regard to the admission of idiots, and would strongly recommend that the law be so amended as to prohibit their further introduction into the hospital. It is evident that they can receive no possible benefit beyond the mere nursing and attention which is bestowed upon all the inmates, and the concurrent testimony of all the officers is to the point that their presence exerts the most injurious influence upon the remainder of the patients. If such change be not made, they should at least be confined to a ward by themselves, and should, in no case, be permitted to mingle with the insane.

The committee cannot speak from personal inspection as to the mode of keeping accounts adopted by the officers of the institution, but are of opinion that the method suggested by the committee appointed at the last session should be pursued. By providing that the person authorized to make contracts shall, in every case, require duplicate bills, on one of which he shall indorse an order on the treasurer to pay the amount, and on the other take a receipt for the order so given by him on the treasurer; and that no account shall be paid without bill of items furnished, indorsed by the appropriate committee, or superintendent, all confusion will be avoided, and accuracy and fidelity in the financial management of the institution secured.

The committee would repeat the suggestion heretofore made, that no female with children, except the superintendent's and steward's wives, should be employed in the asylum.

It has been proposed that the governor should appoint a board, to consist of three, as visitors, for the hospital, one of whom should be the superintendent of a like institution from some neighboring state, and the remaining two distinguished physicians from our own state. Instead of this proposition your committee would recommend that by an arrangement which could, without difficulty, be made, a congress of the superintendents of the different lunatic asylums in the Union be annually held at some convenient point, and that the necessary traveling expenses of our superintendent, while on such mission, be defrayed from the hospital fund. By this means each would become possessor of the united experience of all, from which it is believed the most beneficial results would ensue.

Some inconvenience appears to have resulted from a reduction in the number of trustees, under an act of the legislature passed during the session of 1851—'2. Your committee cannot too earnestly urge the pressing necessity that exists for an entire new organization of the board. They would modify the suggestions of the previous committee in the following manner:

First. That the number of trustees be increased to nine, to be appointed by the governor, by and with the advice and consent of the senate, and to hold their offices for the term of six years.

Second. That five of the board shall be taken from citizens of Morgan county, and the remainder from other counties.

Third. That it be so arranged, to be determined by lot, that three of said board shall go out of office every two years.

Fourth. That mileage be allowed to the trustees assembling from distant counties to attend any official meeting, the rate to be fixed by a majority of the board.

Fifth. That no trustee shall be a member of the board of any other state institution, nor be permitted to hold any office, or enter into any contract connected with the institution.

The present building, when the four additional wards shall have been finished, will only accommodate about two hundred patients. Two hundred and forty applications for admission have already been made, and it is estimated that there are perhaps double this number of lunatics within our state limits. In view of these facts, and inasmuch as it is of the highest importance that there should be a more perfect classification of the inmates, the committee would recommend that further additions be made to the hospital in accordance with the original plan, as rapidly as the fund will allow. To accomplish this end, they would urge a continuance of the present rate of taxation from which it is believed can be realized a sufficient sum to complete the whole structure within three years, besides paying current expenses. When thus finished, it will be sufficiently commodious to accommodate nearly if not all the unfortunate victims of insanity in our state. The building and all its appurtenances should be pushed on to completion during the present season of unparalleled prosperity, and all necessary taxes for this purpose will be borne cheerfully by our people. When this object is accomplished, it is estimated that a tax of not exceeding one-tenth of a mill will be amply sufficient to defray all necessary expenses. This exceedingly light assessment will scarcely be felt by the individual tax payer, while from the aggregate wealth of the state it will create a munificent fund, which will alleviate the misfortunes of hundreds whose sad condition appeals most powerfully to our sympathies.

H. L. SUTPHIN and others, Committee.

February 1st, 1853.